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RETAIL
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P14, Bill 59
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**TESTIMONY OF TINA YAMAKI
PRESIDENT
RETAIL MERCHANTS OF HAWAII
OCTOBER 5, 2016**

Re: BILL 59 (2016) RELATING TO THE USE OF BAGS PROVIDED TO CUSTOMERS

Good morning Chairman Martin and members of the Honolulu City Council. I am Tina Yamaki, President of the Retail Merchants of Hawaii and I appreciate this opportunity to testify.

The Retail Merchants of Hawaii (RMH) is a statewide not-for-profit trade organization representing 200 members and over 2,000 storefronts, and is committed to support the retail industry and business in general in Hawaii. The retail industry is one of the largest employers in the state, employing 25% of the labor force.

The Retail Merchants of Hawaii strongly opposes Bill 59 (2016) Relating to the use of Bags Provided to Customers. Retailers continue to be concerned about our aina and have supported many initiatives that preserve and protect our environment. Retailers are in the business of providing goods to consumers and should be able to provide a vehicle for customers to transport their purchases out of the store. However, there needs to maintain a fair balance regarding the plastic bag issue.

This bill proposes to totally ban compostable plastic bags as well as increase the thickness of reusable plastic bags from 2.25 mil to 3 mils thick. Although we appreciate the council's attempt to bring the Oahu reusable plastic bag issue to the same levels as that of the county of Hawaii Island and Maui, the solution is not substitutes.

We have testified in the past against compostable plastic bags as they are designed to disintegrate and biodegrade quickly and safely when composted in a professionally managed composting facility. The landfill or back-yard project will not necessarily have the desired result. However, since the ordinance has gone into effect, many retailers are using these types of bags.

In addition, to have this measure go into effect on July 1, 2017 would also place an undo burden on many of our retailers who have specially ordered compostable and 2.25 mil thick bags in bulk to be in compliance with the law that went into effect on July 1, 2015. If they have remaining compostable or 2.25 mil thick plastic bags, they will be have to be "trashed," and new and more expensive bags ordered that comply with the ordinance. These all add to the cost of doing business and will be passed on to the consumer.

We should be addressing wise management of this resource with the principle of "reduce, reuse and recycle". We should allow the new ordinance to have a chance. We are already seeing a change in consumers who are bringing their own bags when shopping. We absolutely support the broadest use of reusable bags as the ultimate solution. However, we do know that consumers' acceptance and use of these bags will not be universal or practical at all times.

Again mahalo for this opportunity to testify.

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